

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT HEAD LICE

What are Head Lice?

Head Lice are tiny light brown wingless, six-legged bugs that live on the human scalp. They are about the size of the sesame seed. Head lice lay tiny oval grayish-white to brown colored eggs (nits), which the female louse glues to a strand of hair. Unlike dandruff, eggs/nits can't be washed off or brushed away. Eggs/nits need to be pulled off from the single strand of hair. The life span of an adult louse is 30-35 days. A female louse lays 3-5 eggs per day. Lice eggs hatch in about one week.

How do you get lice?

Lice do not hop, jump or fly. They crawl. Lice are spread from person-to-person by head-to-head contact or by sharing of brushes, combs, hats, scarfs, coats, and bedding.

Signs of Head Lice |

Itching happens when lice bite and suck blood from the scalp. This is a sign that head lice are present. Not everyone will feel itching. Lice and eggs/nits can be seen if one looks very closely. Live lice move very quickly. The eggs/nits are usually the first thing seen when lice are present. Bite marks are sometimes seen at the base of the neck and around the ears. Skin irritation and infection may occur from itching. See a healthcare provider if there are signs of skin infection.

Treatment for Head Lice

Use lice treatment as directed. All lice-killing products are pesticides and must be used with caution. Regular shampooing will not kill head lice. **NOTE:** Lice treatments can be harmful if not used correctly. Keep lice treatments out of the reach of children. Read and follow all directions carefully. Talk to a healthcare provider if your child has a ragweed allergy, asthma, history of seizures, or is under the age of 2 years.

All egg/nits must be removed from the hair to stop the lice cycle. Eggs/nits must be removed by picking them off the hair strands with your fingertips or by cutting off the hair strands they are attached to. Egg/nit removal combs are available, but may not be effective in removing ALL nits. To prevent reinfestation, continue to check those persons who were found to have live lice or nits daily for 10-14 days - removing all nits.

- Many lice products require a second treatment. Follow bottle

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instructions for retreatment.

- Animals do not carry human head lice, so there is no need to treat family pets.
- Lice treatment may prevent a person from getting lice. Lice treatments kill live lice, but do not kill all the eggs/nits. Prophylactic treatment of bed mates and immediate members of the household may be recommended. Consult with your family physician.

Head Lice Information for Schools from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Students diagnosed with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after appropriate treatment has begun. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice. Please check your school's policy, however in general, a child can return to school immediately, regardless of the presence of nits.

Head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.



Jefferson County Public Health
Community Health Services
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